

Area North Committee – 22 May 2013

10. Area Development (North) – Review of 2012-13 and Priorities for 2013-14

Strategic Director: Rina Singh, Place and Performance
Assistant Directors: Helen Rutter / Kim Close, Communities
Service Manager: Charlotte Jones, Area Development Manager (North)
Lead Officer: As above
Contact Details: charlotte.jones@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462251

Purpose of the Report

To report on work undertaken by the Area Development (North) Service during 2012-13 and to look ahead to 2013-14.

Councillors are asked to contact the Area Development Manager (North) or other named contacts in advance of the meeting with requests for further information.

Public Interest

Area Development teams support the council's four Area Committees (North, South, East and West) to secure investment in local social, economic and environmental priorities for Yeovil, the market towns and rural areas of South Somerset.

This is our end of year report for 2012-13 which also looks ahead to 2013-14.

Recommendations

- (1) Note and comment on the report and presentation highlighting any specific current issues within wards and parishes.
- (2) Endorse the proposed priorities and work programme for Area North for 2013-14 set out on page 10 and at Appendix B

1. Area North Development - what was achieved - 2012-13

The work of the Area Development Service broadly falls into two three types of service designed around the remit of the Area Committee: local investment programmes; local access to services; community engagement – including town and parish liaison.

Local investment programmes: - we work with communities to make investment into social, economic or environmental well-being. We use the principles of 'Asset Based Community Development' to achieve this. Our work may include any aspect of project planning, consultation, securing resources, delivery and monitoring. This work can include frequent contact lasting some years or be a very 'light touch' and this will depend on the needs of the group and significance of the project. We also work with other SSDC services to deliver the Council Plan and other relevant strategies.

- During the year the team handled over 200 requests for information, project support, guidance, printing or hire of equipment from ward members, town and parish councils, local businesses, other public organisations and community groups.
- Area North made a financial investment in 27 community led local projects, and 30 further projects were supported with time from the Area Development team. Appendix A illustrates projects supported ward by ward.
- The Area North development team responded to or was involved in consultation on more than 30 planning applications affecting local community facilities, economic development or access to services.

Local access to services: - SSDC operates a network of community offices across South Somerset where residents can find face to face help with their enquiries and requests. The office in Area North is based at Langport Information Centre. In addition the Area North team work in partnership with other agencies and local communities to maintain and develop local access to services.

- In 2012-13 the Langport Community Office service helped 1645 residents including 1,020 seeking help with housing and welfare benefits. [During the year the Somerton Community Office was closed, and the hours of opening at the Langport Community Office were reduced to 15 hours per week from 22. This helped achieve budgetary savings for SSDC, and the changes have been managed to minimise the effect on local residents.]
- Area North helped to fund and arrange additional face to face support from a Welfare Benefits Advisor and this work will continue into 2013-14 (as agreed by the Area North Committee in January 2013)
- Public transport services are kept under review, and support to design local solutions to improve access to transport is provided as required / affordable. Area North recently awarded a grant to the Somerton and Langport Links Community Transport service, which provided 9812 passenger journeys during 2012-13.
- The four Local Information Centres in Area North (Somerton, Langport, Martock, South Petherton), fulfil an important role for visitors and residents alike. Area North maintains links with the volunteer groups who manage the LICs, through a service level agreement and a small annual contribution to running costs. During 2012-13 volunteers handled over 10,000 enquiries.
- The Somerset Advice Network provides training and support to agency staff and volunteers helping residents find the help they need. Area North is supporting a training programme (The 'Info Hubs' project), based in Langport at present which has involved staff and volunteers from the Levels Childrens Centre, Library, The Angel, the Local Information Centre, Netbuddies, Yarlinton Housing Group, and SSDC.

Community Engagement including town and parish council liaison

- **Area North community event** – an annual event involving a wide range of agencies and community groups. The event is a forum for discussion and helps raise awareness of who can help in solving local problems or to develop new ideas including grant funding and other support.
- **Neighbourhood Planning, Community Plans and 'Localism'**

- The Localism Act introduced 'Neighbourhood Plans' into the National Planning Framework. Area North helped to host three workshops for local councillors – 41 councillors from 19 local councils attended.
- Area Development, Development Management and Spatial Planning are providing guidance to a number of town and parish councils to re-fresh community plans through consultation, but so far no formal applications to create a Neighbourhood Plan have been submitted to SSDC.
- The Localism Act also introduced the 'Community Right to Bid'. One nomination has been added to the councils Register of Assets of Community Value.

2. Looking ahead - Area North priorities and work programme for 2013-14

The current priorities for the Area Committee are still felt to be relevant and fit for purpose – providing a broad framework within which a wide range of projects are supported or directly managed by the Area North team.

- **Jobs** – we will aim to add value to the economy in Area North, through promoting sustainable economic growth, assisting with the delivery of the Somerset Rural Broadband Programme, promoting tourism and enhancing the offer to visitors.
- **Affordable Housing** – we will promote the delivery of affordable homes in Area North, including support to test and develop new models.
- **Self-Help** – we will promote greater levels of self-help to promote the sustainability of local services and facilities for all ages.
- **Flood and Water management** – we will promote locally led solutions which prevent unacceptable flood events in our communities; we will support the work of the Somerset Water Management Partnership including the task force for the Levels and Moors; we will seek to include past learning from the Parrett Catchment Project into future solutions and we will support the Environment Agency find a long term solution to flood relief and return our rivers to their original profile.”

Appendix B - includes the current (ie planned) work programme for 2013 -14 to help address area priorities, or are within the Council Plan. Further projects are likely to be added during the year as they arise, where the requirements match with local / corporate priorities and where the time and relevant expertise can be made available.

Financial implications

None from this report.

Council Plan Implications

The recommended priorities are in line with the Council Plan (2012-2015). The service team considers the implications for the Council Plan when negotiating support for local projects, handling enquiries and assessing grants.

Carbon Emissions and Adapting to Climate Change Implications (NI188)

None directly from this report. There are a number of local initiatives designed to promote carbon reduction for example promoting sustainable tourism. In particular where we are asked to support buildings projects, applicants are expected to assess the

business case for energy efficiency and carbon reduction. Opportunities for sustainable transport and promoting local self-containment are encouraged.

Equality and Diversity Implications

None directly from this report. Projects and initiatives will be designed or assessed for support using the principles of equality analysis, and make a direct contribution to the Councils Single Equality Scheme. For example projects for community facilities will be expected to demonstrate accessibility.

Background Papers: SSDC Council Plan; Area Development Plan 2012-13.
